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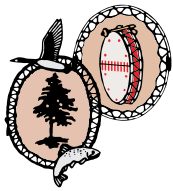
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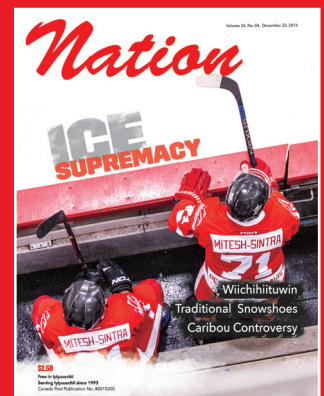
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Overhead shot of the Pessamit
Montagnais bench
Photo by
Jonathan Levert of Image
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Good Will to all

by Will Nicholls



It's time for the last editorial thoughts of 2016. It's been a crazy year: no charges for the Val-d'Or SQ officers denounced for physical and sexual abuse, questionable environmental monitoring and practices by De Beers, the amazing support for Standing Rock, Donald Trump surprising the hell out of everybody in the world, Attawapiskat's suicide epidemic, the first AGAs by the larger Cree entities and so on. There's been good and there's been bad.

Like Santa, *the Nation* has an idea who's been naughty and who's been nice. We also know who modeled themselves after the Grinch. I have a list but I'm not going to name names. After all, this is the holiday season and one of good Will and cheer. I wouldn't want to find a few pieces of coal in my Christmas stocking because I was naughty or usurped who Santa placed on his list.

In fact, that is something I like to do each year at this time. No personal

rants or expressions of outrage against the evil scum-sucking money-grubbing narcissistic selfish short-sighted sons of bitc.... Sorry, almost did what I did not like doing at this time of celebration. No such negative judgments should mar this time of caring, sharing and joy. We can do that in the New Year. Besides, being really nice to someone you been having problems with all year freaks them out. And who knows? It might shift the relationship to a more positive path. As my dad always told me, you get more with honey than with vinegar.

My idea of a fun time is not destroying someone else's good time. So forgive and forget. Don't be quick to take offense and get physical. Spending time in a cell or the hospital emergency ward during the holidays sucks – or so I'm told.

When partying, find another way to get home than driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It just

isn't worth it as police become super vigilant at this time of year. Also there are so many accidents related to the holiday spirits leading to injury and death. The only one who should drink and drive during the holidays is Saint Nicholas. I remember leaving something a little stronger than milk out for the jolly man in the hopes of more and better presents. It was my dad's suggestion and I always thought of him as a wise man during Christmas.

Don't forget to share with those less fortunate. It's the right thing to do no matter which religion you follow (or not).

But enough of reaching for that preaching. I wish a very Merry Christmas, happy holidays and Happy New Year to one and all. May you get everything you want, especially the happiness of family and friends both new and old. Until next year, I remain friendly and caring.



“Service Integrity Justice”?

Racial profiling documented in **disturbing report**

by Will Nicholls

A recent report, titled *The Judicialization of Homelessness in Val-d'Or*, shows that racial profiling in the northern city is a fact of life.

The report found that Val-d'Or police target Indigenous people for minor infractions, with 79.2% of all tickets handed out from 2012-2014 given to those of First Nations descent. Of individuals who received more than 10 tickets in this period, 95% were Indigenous and of those who received more than 15 tickets, 100% were Indigenous. The report was researched and produced by the universities of Montreal and Ottawa, in conjunction with the Observatoire sur les profilages.

Public faith in criminal justice system and law enforcement is part of the foundation of a democracy. Quebec's justice system requires all Quebecers, regardless of ethnic or racial background to have confidence in the fairness of the process. Police in any community must have the confidence and trust of the public to effectively do their job. The report indicates this is lacking in Val-d'Or.

Cree Justice Director Donald Nicholls noted that the federal government introduced changes to the Criminal Code of Canada in 1996

to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in prisons in Canada. At the time it was reported around 10% of the prison population is Aboriginal even though Aboriginal people only represented 2% of the national population.

“Today, this situation has worsened with almost 25% of the prison population being Aboriginal people, while only representing close to 4% of the national population,” said Nicholls. “This recent report suggests that unpaid fines are contributing to the number of Aboriginal people being incarcerated in Quebec. If this is the reality we face, we need to work together to find ways to reduce the numbers, not continue to increase them.”

One of the problems facing poor people penalized for minor offences is the lack of an alternative to paying the fines incurred. Three Cree people are currently in federal penitentiaries serving two or more years for non-violent crimes because they were unable to pay their fines. The report says that the “overwhelming majority of offences refer to non-violent acts.”

One of the report's recommendations states, “A moratorium should be imposed on incarceration for non-payment of fines in Val-d'Or, fines should be cancelled and alternative measures

should be put in place. The Government of Quebec should modify the Code of Penal Procedure to eliminate the possibility of incarcerating people for default payment of fines in cases where individuals are unable to pay.”

Sharon Hunter, the director of social development at the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, said the study “confirms what our people have been telling us for years – First Nations members in the streets fall victim to discrimination and profiling that accentuates their distress, suffering and vulnerability.”

The report concludes “that there are several indicators of social and racial profiling and systemic discrimination in Val-d'Or against homeless individuals and, in particular, Indigenous individuals who are homeless.”

These include:

- An absence or lack of social responses and support for homeless people, in particular Indigenous people;
- Several challenges in terms of integration and access to services in the City for Indigenous people (including housing);
- High incidence of violence and poverty among this population;
- Absence or lack of social and mental health in Indigenous commu-



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Bears win big in Gatineau

The Cree Nation Bears took home first place in Midget BB competition at the Jean Labonté hockey tournament in Gatineau in late November. The Bears were 4-0 in their division, downing the Pirates of Dollard des Ormeaux 6-3 and the Loups des Collines 4-2 in their first two games before defeating the Répentigny Olympiques 3-1 and the Saint-Eustache Patriotes 5-2 in their final two matches.

Coach Fred Perowne acknowledged the support of fans from all over the Cree Nation who travelled from Eeyou Istchee to cheer on the team and gave special mention to forward Brandon Wadden who scored 10 goals in four games. Wadden was invited to play with the Amos AAA team following the tournament and netted a goal and two assists in his first appearance with the Foresters.



Val-d''or marches for **police**

When Quebec crown prosecutors announced that no charges would be laid against the six Sûreté du Québec officers accused of abuse against Native women in Val-d'Or, there were demonstrations of solidarity in town and an outpouring of support from Indigenous communities and organizations as well as mayor Pierre Corbeil and members of the local community.

Weeks later – once the popular and economically profitable Cree Regional Events and Entertainment hockey and broomball tournament had wrapped up – SQ officers and civilians decided it was their turn to take to the streets.

Close to 100 people from the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, including off-duty officers, family members and civilians, participated in a march December 11 to show support for members of the city's SQ detachment.

Preissac resident Bob Chevrier, who is related to a member of the Val-d'Or SQ, organized the march. "I wanted them to know they have our support and to do something to help them put it behind them," Chevrier told the CBC.

“We are not here for pity or to play the victims but it was not easy for us, for the relatives, the

families," said Carol-Ann Girard, the wife of a local officer.

As Val-d'Or struggles to reconcile with Quebec's Indigenous population it's clear that some officials and non-Native residents still don't grasp the reality of the way First Nations can be and have been treated in the city.

"I think we are witnessing here a demonstration of solidarity, support and thanks or recognition, if I may put it that way, to people who are called upon to intervene in situations that are too often delicate, and also very difficult," said Mayor Pierre Corbeil following the march.

While many have said they support the Native women who came forward to share their experiences of abuse at the hands of local officers, including Corbeil, it seems that others see the lack of charges laid by crown prosecutors as proof of the officers' innocence.

During their press conference in Val-d'Or November 18, however, the four prosecutors emphasized that the decision didn't mean that events described in the 37 allegations by 31 different women did not take place. Instead, it was due to their low hopes of obtaining convictions during trial.



In Brief

Happy New Year to all!

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The holidays are a perfect time to make connections with your family. Eeyou Communications Network wishes for everyone to enjoy some quality time together!

Le temps des fêtes est parfait pour connecter avec la famille. Réseau de Communications Eeyou souhaite à tous d'avoir du temps de qualité ensemble !



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A Cree Hockey Tradition Returns to Val-d'Or

by Dan Coyle
Photos by Jonathan Levert of
Image Nomade Productions



BACK IN_TOWN



Last year marked the first time in three decades that the tournament failed to take place

An annual rite of winter for the Cree Nation was revived earlier this month as the C.R.E.E. Senior Hockey and Broomball Tournament returned to Val-d'Or following a one-year absence.

Last year marked the first time in three decades that the tournament failed to take place, as the event was cancelled as a result of the Cree Nation Government boycott of the city in the wake of published reports of abuse of Indigenous woman by members of the local

detachment of the Sûreté du Québec.

The one-year hiatus didn't dampen the enthusiasm surrounding this important First Nations event.

Over 1000 players, accompanied by family members, descended on Val-d'Or December 1-4 for the 36th edition of the tournament, while live web streaming of the action was enjoyed by an estimated 40,000 viewers.

Over 70 teams battled for coveted championship banners in seven divisions, including Women's Recreational Broomball,

Women's Competitive Broomball, Women's Hockey, Old Timers Hockey 40+, Class B2 Hockey, Class B1 Hockey, and the main event, Class A Hockey.

The Waswanipi Chiefs recovered from a tournament-opening 3-2 loss to the Waskaganish Wings to emerge as this year's Class A Hockey champions.

Powered by leading scoring Vern Cooper, the Chiefs subsequently allowed only two goals in three straight wins to capture first place in preliminary action.

Waswanipi dominated in the playoff round, handing Pessamit Montagnais a 4-1 loss before clinching this year's championship with a 4-0 shutout victory over the Wemindji Wolves.

Vern Cooper displayed the skills that convinced the Plymouth Whalers to select him in the first round of the 2006 OHL Priority Draft, tallying a pair of goals and four assists to take home Top Scorer honours.

Alex Cooper made this year's victory a family affair by earning the MVP award, while a pair of shut-

out performances resulted in Chiefs backstop Francois Koczynski getting the nod as Best Goalie.

With three points in four games, along with three penalty minutes, Wemindji's Dave Lazarus was named Best Forward in Class A Hockey, joining teammate Tyler Shanush, who picked up the award for Best Defense.

While the men from Wemindji fell short in their quest for this year's Class A Hockey championship banner, the Wemindji Lady Wolves got the job done in

the Women's Hockey category.

After splitting their first two games, posting a 5-2 win over the Oujé Lady Hawks and a 4-1 loss to the Mistissini Mustangs, the Lady Wolves put on a show in their preliminary date with Team Nunavik, dominating in an 11-1 win.

Nunavik grabbed an early 1-0 lead in that contest, but the rest of the game belonged to Wemindji's Moreen Laloche.

The 20-year-old put on a clinic, scoring eight straight goals in the Lady Wolves'



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Daisy Ottereyes of the Waswanipi Eagles potted four goals and three assists to claim the award as Top Scorer, while teammate Savannah Jolly was selected as the winner



There was no shortage of goal production when the **Old Timers** hit the ice

of the tournament's Best Defense award.

There was no shortage of goal production when the Old Timers hit the ice at this year's tournament.

The Waskaganish Ex-Wings set the tone in their tournament opener, scoring seven third-period goals en route to a 9-4 win over the Washaw Sibi Kings.

The Ex-Wings followed up with another offensive explosion, handing the Lac Simon Old Bucks a 9-2 beating, but received a taste of their own medicine in a 9-7 loss to the Wemindji 69ers.

But the boys from Waskaganish would eventually have their revenge, eking out a 5-4 win over the 69ers in the category final to claim the Old Timers Hockey 40+ championship banner.

Ross Miniquaken of the 69ers led the way with 10 points, edging out six Ex-Wings shooters in the race for Top Scorer, while Waskaganish netminder Dave Peace emerged as Top

Goalie, and fellow Ex-Wing Donald Namagoose was named MVP.

Another championship banner can be raised at the Rupert River Sports Complex after the Waskaganish Raiders claimed victory in Class B2 Hockey.

The Raiders knocked off the Waswanipi Grand Chiefs 8-5 in the category

final, powered by MVP Ryan Weistche and Top Goalie Kurtis Cheezo.

Kurt Hester ran away with the Top Scorer award after finding the back of the net 10 times, and adding five assists while leading the Waskaganish Dawgs to a semi-final appearance at this year's tourney.

The Mistissini Chummys added to their championship banner collection with a 9-2 rout of Pikogan Maian in the Class B1 Hockey final.

Stanley Kistabish represented Pikogan as the recipient of Class B1 Best Defense award, and the Nemaska Axemen's Sammy Matches picked up the Top Scorer

award with a five-point performance.

But otherwise, it was all Chummys, with Max Lapointe winning the award for tournament MVP and Best Forward, while former NCAA women's hockey netminder Shayna Dominique outplayed the men between the pipes, picking up the prize as Best Goalie.



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Glenna Matoush donated this painting to the new english superhospital. It is part of the series Shaman Transporting Souls to the Heavens



Art is in the mind

Glenna Matoush was on hand at the event to display the art she has created since she became legally blind. "I can still see the art I want to do in my head," she told *the Nation*.

Matoush, who now lives in Montreal, draws from her experiences in traditional Native ceremonies in her work. She uses birch bark, porcupine quills, moose and caribou hair, bones, beads, sweet grass and cedar on paper, canvas and denim with both acrylic and oils. She incorpo-

rates the connection to the land that many Native people feel and know in a way that any culture can understand.

Matoush spent many years in Mistissini and began fighting for Native rights in the 1960s. She took part in the occupation of Alcatraz Island near San Francisco in 1969 with a group of American Indians who called themselves Indians of All Tribes (IOAT). The action called for respect of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie between the Lakota and the United States that stated all

retired, abandoned or out-of-use federal land was to be returned to the Native people from whom it was taken. They felt since the Alcatraz penitentiary had been closed in 1963, the island should qualify for return to Native control under the treaty. Though forcibly ended by the US government, the 19-month-long occupation had a direct effect on federal Indian policy and established a precedent for Indian activism. At its peak, there were over 400 people on the island.

A tour and feast was held at the hotel on Guy Street in downtown Montreal December 6 to celebrate the changes as well as the official opening of the Cree lodging centre. Over 200 people attended the event, including Cree patients.

The hotel has taken great steps to accommodate Cree patients. They included a spiritual room (cheyamaougamikw), an activity room (sabtuan) and a community kitchen (piminûwhaûgamikw). The rooms were clean, comfortable and made it a "home away from home" one person remarked.

Perhaps surprisingly, Cree Board of Health and Social Services Chairperson Bella M. Petawabano said people should continue complaining. As Moses told the guests, "This is an example of the Cree Health Board listening to the people who use this service. It is the persistent voice of the people that made this event today. As I told you many times, the Cree Health Board looks at complaints in a different way – in a positive way. By complaining that's how we improve the services



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has been working really hard to make this happen.”

Director of Justice and Correctional Services Donald Nicholls said the community kitchen model at the hotel is a proven success. “This is a great initiative of the Cree Health Board to have a kitchen in Montreal for patients to cook traditional meals,” he said.

“We established a traditional food program for people in detention a number of years ago, as Elders told us healing comes from the land. We figured if we could not bring people to the land, we would bring that healing to the people we work with through the traditional foods. So, we set up freezers in our communities

to allow people to contribute food to the program. We would be happy to also work with the health board if there are donations people would like to make for Cree people who may be in the south for health reasons.”

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come said the evolution of health care in Eeyou Istchee



is part of a long-term vision to have Crees manage their own social services. “Our leaders in the past wanted to have control of their own health services,” said Coon Come. “We’ve talked about control of Cree education. Then we talked about control of Cree health and social services and I recognize Abel Kitchen, who was involved in those negotiations. That’s certainly being masters of your own destiny, of managing your own facilities. That was not easy but the hardest thing is to implement those visions and those dreams.”

services and I recognize Abel Kitchen, who was involved in those negotiations. That's certainly being masters of your own destiny, of managing your own facilities. That was not easy but the hardest thing is to implement those visions and those dreams."

DIGGING IN

Standing Rock water protectors

celebrate, prepare for long winter

by Joshua Grant

Photos by Will Nicholls

The original sacred fire at the Oceti Sakowin resistance camp was extinguished earlier this month. But for many, the fight is far from over. While people around the world rejoiced on December 4 when the Obama administration suspended the easement for Energy Transfer Partners to drill under Standing Rock's Lake Oahe, hundreds of water protectors continued to dig in and prepare themselves for a harsh winter at the North Dakota protest site.

With a Trump presidency on the horizon, an Energy Transfer Partner's board member has already appointed to his cabinet. And as the company insists it will proceed with construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), Native and

non-Native activists feel that they've won the battle but not the war.

Dallas Goldtooth, of the Indigenous Environmental Network, took to social media the day of the announcement to outline what exactly the decision means for the Dakota, Lakota and Nakota people and their supporters.

"Today, the Obama Administration announced that it will not grant the final easement for the Dakota Access pipeline to cross the Missouri River. They did not DENY the easement, they SUSPENDED a decision on the easement until an Environmental Impact Statement is conducted on ALTERNATIVE river crossings," he explained.

"Now it's a waiting game to see the final nails in the coffin: will DAPL investors continue to flee? Will oil suppliers drop their contracts? Will President-elect Trump take any action on the pipeline should the







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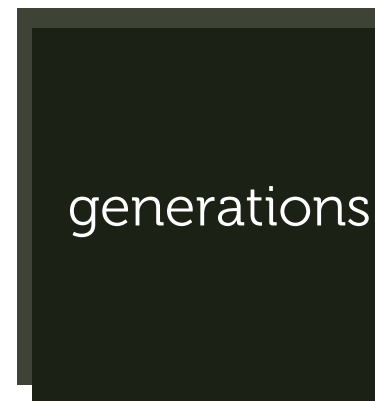
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A "how-to" on traditional snowshoe making in Eeyou Istchee

by Dan Isaac

Making snowshoes is in George Longchap's blood. He learned by watching his father, who learned from watching his father, and today Longchap is teaching his daughter the tradition.

"In my childhood days I always watched

my dad making snowshoes and I saw his process," he said. "I remember going out into the bush with him to find the trees. Birch or tamarack is what he used. These days we use white ash or cedar."

Protocol dictated that he only observe the process as a child,

but crafting snowshoes is something he always knew he'd do. "When I watched my dad make the snowshoes I wanted to make my own, but he told me I couldn't make traditional snowshoes until I was older," said Longchap. "Even as a teenager, I wanted to do it, but it wasn't until I got married that I found the

time to make my snowshoes."

Longchap never thought he'd be taking requests or making as many pairs as he has over the past few years. Initially he set out to make himself a pair, but when people saw the quality of his work, the requests came flooding in – some from as far away

as Winnipeg. "Once people found out, they started asking for pairs," said Longchap. "Over the last two years, I've made 26 pair. I don't even have a pair for myself yet."

A pair of Longchap's snowshoes can take up to 10 days to finish. "We all have our own style of snowshoes and I make mine from the begin-

ning to the end," said Longchap. "I even do the weaving."

Longchap is committed to carrying on the tradition and hopes his daughter does the same. "If we can't continue with what our ancestors did, then we're lost," he said. "I love what I'm doing. I want to continue what my dad taught me."

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Choosing the right wood

1

The best wood to make traditional snowshoes is birch or tamarack, but any hard wood can be used as well. The grain needs to be straight throughout the board's length, without any large knots, and only the sapwood rings of the tree are used. A perfectly straight log can be hard to find, especially in ash, but they're crucial if you want to bend the wood without cracking or breaking it. The wood is cut by splitting the log and planing it down to the right size (two inches).

2

First soak the planks in hot water or steam them with a steamer. Then bend the planks in both directions; that's how the snowshoe becomes flexible. Then tie the plank around something that has your desired shape – some people use traps for this. Once tied, the planks must be dried. In summer, they can be hung outside. In winter, hang them by a wood stove. The ties will loosen when they're dry and ready for the next step.

Bending

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3

4

A man and a woman are working together on a craft project. The man, wearing glasses and a striped shirt, is on the left, and the woman, wearing glasses and a grey t-shirt, is on the right. They are both focused on their work, which involves a large, curved wooden frame and some red fabric. The background shows a workshop with various tools and materials.

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U of T researcher says
Nutrition North
fails to meet
northern needs

\$50

Lives at Stake

by Joshua Grant

University of Toronto researcher Tracey Galloway didn't mince words when asked for her opinion concerning Canada's Nutrition North program.

"It's not effective," she said.

Established by the former Conservative government in 2011 to replace the Foodmail program, Nutrition North Canada (NNC) is a government subsidy for retailers, mandated to improve access to "perishable nutritious food" in isolated communities. According to Galloway's in-depth study of the new program, it is difficult to judge whether the program has met this goal, and may in fact have done the opposite.

The subsidy level per product varies across eligible communities and is based on geographic location and population. Under Nutrition North, however, the subsidy goes to retailers, not to the consumer.

Under the Foodmail program, anyone who shipped food up north could do so at the Canada Post rate, Galloway noted. "Now it's a retail subsidy. The money goes to the grocery stores and

“When I travel to these communities I see people suffering severe financial hardship, struggling to afford basic necessities”



they negotiate their own freight rates which are not disclosed to the public.” Galloway, an Anthropology professor at the U of T, was recently in Iqaluit to present her research findings, around the same time as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada completed its national tour of

NNC subsidized communities. Based both on the numbers and her firsthand experience, she believes the program needs a serious overhaul. “The data shows very high prices in remote communities for subsidized items, at least twice as

high as comparable benchmarks in southern regions of Canada,” she told *the Nation*. Meanwhile, items such as diapers and baby-care products, personal and feminine hygiene products, household cleaning products, harvesting equipment

and craft supplies – which all used to be covered by Foodmail – are no longer eligible for subsidy. “When I travel to these communities I see people suffering severe financial hardship, struggling to afford basic necessities, things that are only avail-

able to them at one or two stores in their communities. Some communities only have one store. The average number of stores in northern communities is two, and that includes big cities like Iqaluit,” said Galloway. It’s not just the NNC program that has issues. The



government’s measures to determine whether or not NNC is successful also fall short of the mark. “They look at two criteria to determine success” she said. “The weight of food shipped up north and the cost of food in the commu-

nities. The weight of food shipped north did increase in the first year but we’re measuring the increase against the backdrop of no subsidy for the two years prior to that. “Retailers are paid for every kilo they ship to sub-

sidized communities,” she continued. “They aren’t paid to sell the food at an affordable rate. It’s kind of a hollow measure. It tells us that they ship food but not that it’s consistently available, of a certain quality or available at an affordable price.”

Galloway emphasized the gravity of the program’s shortcomings. “It’s a matter of life and death,” she said. “People are suffering ill health because they can’t afford regular access to healthy food. Our subsidy is meant to guar-

antee that. Right now it’s failing to provide the essentials of life to these communities.” There is also an impact on mental health, she added. “All this financial hardship creates feelings of frustration and failure

in these people who can’t provide for their families given their financial means.” Asked what needs to be done to improve the NNC program, Galloway had a number of specific suggestions for the federal gov-







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ernment, including price caps, more stringent regulations and additions to the list of eligible products.

"I would like to see price ceilings on perishable food items, and I would like to see them tied to southern benchmarks," she said. "I'd like to see a strict regulatory framework within the subsidy to ensure that perishable food is reliably

available and of sufficient quality."

Galloway also noted that third-party quality inspections were a regular part of the Foodmail program whereas Nutrition North leaves quality control up to the retailers.

"We need some accountability around reliable access and quality of food," she concluded. "And

I'd like to see an expansion of the eligibility list so that items previously subsidized under Foodmail could be subsidized under Nutrition North."

Galloway's full research and recommendations to address high costs and limited access to nutritious food in northern Canada will be published in the coming weeks.

"I would like to see price ceilings on perishable food items, and I would like to see them tied to southern benchmarks"

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

The Niskamoon Board of Directors & Staff

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CARIBOU CONTROVERSY

Naskapi caribou hunters cause uproar after taking dozens of caribou in Eeyou Istchee
by Jesse Staniforth



*I looked
at my
buddy at
the time
and said,
'That's
not how
we hunt.'*

Chisasibi's Lorne Sam found the caribou before he met the Naskapi hunters.

"Near kilometre 112 on the Trans-Taiga Highway, there's a road that goes to one of the excess-dykes for the LG-3 dam," Sam told *the Nation*. "I saw a caribou lying in the middle of the road. It was left there. My brother and I went to check on it. The caribou was still warm. It had been shot recently.

"When I went to go get my knife, the guy came around with his pickup. He came out. I introduced myself and asked, 'Is this your caribou?' He said, 'Yes.'

Then a couple more hunters came out from the bush. It was one adult, and three of his sons, I think. They already killed four caribou at that one spot. He said, 'All the caribou ran off, so I chased them with my pick-up.'"

They were Naskapi from near Schefferville. Sam said he was honoured to meet them.

"I said, 'Hello, welcome to our territory,' he recalled. Then he went on his way. It was only on returning the next day that he found car-

ibou guts strewn along the side of the road.

"That scene I didn't like, but I didn't know who did it," he explained. "I went to the same spot where I'd met them, there was a camp nearby. I drove up the access road to the camp and I saw their campsite — and that's where I saw 16 caribou, all lined up and gutted. And they were still driving around in their pickups. Three pickups already had a couple more caribou in the trucks. I looked at my buddy at the time and said, 'That's not how we hunt.'"

Images from the hunt were soon all over social media, and discussion grew both in Cree and Jamesian communities. Radisson's Luc Gervais, in particular, posted a description of the hunt's aftermath, which he mocked as "traditional slaughter," and alleged that the hunters were selling their meat in the south and would soon be back for more. He claimed he had counted 115 caribou. Among Cree Facebook groups, rumours swelled that the hunters were killing in such huge numbers in order to sell their meat.

The estimated number of caribou killed ranged from 60 up to 200.

One local recognized the outsiders and identified one of them. When reached by *the Nation*, the hunter spoke on condition of anonymity.

"I was there for the hunt, over at Radisson. We killed 70 caribou. We were 15 of us," he explained. "We weren't invited. We're allowed because we're Naskapis. It's Innus who aren't allowed. It's in the Cree-Naskapi Act. We took papers from our band with us. It's different than the way



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they hunt there – we just go once a year, we get five each for our families. I've got more than 100 people in my family. The Crees do it that way too sometimes. And they're not just their caribou. I've seen photos of the way some of the others do it. They throw out things they don't use. We take everything back. We gutted them, that's it. I've seen people leave the heads and the legs."

He said that his group of 15 absolutely did not sell the meat, because he considers selling country meat deeply disrespectful to the land. However, he

said another Naskapi hunter had shot 60 caribou in Eeyou Istchee on a recent trip of his own, and on returning to his community, had sold them for between \$300 and \$400 a head, even trying to sell them to the Hunter Support Program (which refused them).

The Nation was forwarded the text of a social media post allegedly made by the second hunter, in which he argued that hunting is hard, difficult work, requiring expensive rifles, ammunition, snowmobiles and equipment.

"We buy beef, chicken, pork and other meats at

the store and never complain about the farmers who charge for the meat," the post read. "But when a Native or Inuk charges for his or her catches, they fail to see how much effort it took to catch the animals. Yes, there was sharing in the past but money had little meaning back then, but now absolutely nothing is free. Please do not complain about Native and Inuit selling country food and stop being a freeloader and make the hunter pay for everything while you enjoy his or her efforts."

Ricky Angatookaluk, from Chisasibi, was sympa-

"We thought they were just going to kill a couple and leave, but when I saw 16 caribou lying in the camp, plus the ones in their pickups, they had more than 20."





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thetic to Naskapi and Innu hunters, because the George River herd that those Nations once harvested has collapsed so drastically that the hunt has been completely closed, even to Native hunters.

However, he drew the line at the idea of selling country meat. "A lot of them are traditional keepers," he said of the Naskapi and Innu. "But some of them do sell caribou meat or a whole caribou. There's not much to say, but we all have the same feelings in Chisasibi."

Sam said he was amazed the Naskapi were allowed to hunt in the Chisasibi region. "We thought they were just going to kill a couple and leave, but when I saw 16 caribou lying in the camp, plus the ones in their pickups, they had more than 20. I was there Friday and Saturday – they were killing more than 20 a day. I saw on Facebook that they were still hunting there two days later."

Sam believed that this kind of hunting played a role in the rapid decline by more than 90% of the George River caribou herd "on their side" of Quebec.

"When the Grand Council heard that the George River herd was almost extinct, they opened up to the Innu hunters and invited them to hunt here in our territories," Sam explained. "But they didn't know what was coming. They overkill them. I don't know what they're thinking, coming onto our side of the territory and hunting the same way they did on their land. You can't kill that many caribou at once – that's not how it works. When I went hunting last time, we killed one for my family and one for my buddy's family. The meat is still in my freezer. I'm going to go again to stock up my meat later on."

This is not the first time this year that outsiders have come in after the caribou, Sam noted. Recently, a number of hunters he believed to be Innu were after the caribou near LG-1.

"A lot of people thought they were dangerous, because they don't know where the camps are, where people are living in the camps along the highway. Some people said they saw bullet holes in their tents."

Sam didn't blame all Innu or Naskapi for what he sees as the misdeeds of their cousins. However, he said, "The way I saw them is the way I'm going to judge them."



Under the Northern Sky A Christmas wish

by Xavier Kataquapit



Christmas is right around the corner and I am reminded of that fact every time I go shopping. The shops in all the local northern Ontario communities I call home, like Kirkland Lake, Iroquois Falls, Timmins, Cochrane, North Bay and Sudbury, are promoting Christmas with posters, advertising in the media and music through sound systems in bigger stores.

Don't get me wrong – there are lots of things I like about Christmas. But the commercial part of it has really taken over to such a degree that it is difficult for me to still find the heart in this celebration.

I don't recall a huge celebration at Christmas when I was a boy in Attawapiskat. We went through the motions because we were more or less convinced it was the normal thing to do with a tree to decorate and giving gifts, but I never did get very excited by it all. Mostly, Christmas often ended up as a time of year when there was a lot of drinking and tragedy.

Still, for children I believe that Christmas with all of the myths and legends is generally a good thing. Children's minds are full of images of Santa, reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh, wonderful gifts and lots of treats to eat. But when it takes a turn for a lot of drinking and drugs in the home, the memories of childhood become very dark and sad.

Christmas and Santa Claus are new concepts for the Cree of James Bay. We have only known the Christian religions and the celebrations that come with them for a couple hundred years. Before that we lived a life that was all about the land, Mother Nature, the spirits of the land, water and air, and of course the creatures. European religions and celebrations and holidays like Christmas were not known by my people. In contrast, Christians had been

following their religions for nearly 2000 years and Christmas and Santa had histories that connected back many hundreds of years.

The funny thing is that the Santa who we know today has origins that would surprise most of us. The original Santa Claus can be traced back to Saint Nicholas who was a Christian bishop in the third century in Turkey. He would have been darker skinned and probably skinny. It is interesting to note that the name Santa Claus is actually a contraction that was made over the years of Saint Nicholas. His day was originally celebrated on December 6 to mark the day he died in the mid third century and in honour of him for the kindness and good deeds he did for children. In his lifetime he survived being imprisoned and persecuted by the Romans. Later he was associated with Christmas Eve.

People who were Christians around the world started celebrating his day and his legend in reference to Kris Kringle, La Befana, Yule Tomte, and Christkindli. Santa made his debut in North America in 1809 when Washington Irving wrote "A History of New York," featuring Saint Nicholas, a jolly, fat fellow smoking a Dutch pipe, who flew over the rooftops in a wagon and dropped presents down the chimneys. A minister by the name of Clement Clarke Moore in 1822 wrote a Christmas poem for his daughters titled, "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas," later more popularly known as 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. A lot of the images that we now associate with Santa came from this poem which became very popular. A cartoonist named Thomas Nast used

Moore's poem later to draw images of Santa which appeared in Harper's Weekly and that image was more like the Santa we know today as chubby, with a big white beard and carrying a bag full of toys. Nast was German and called his character Santa Claus which caught on with Americans.

Santa has been used to advertise gift buying and giving from the 1800s. The colourful Santa that we know today was partly created by Coca-Cola in a 1930s advertising campaign done by artist Haddon Sundblom which presented St. Nick in the company's classic red.


So even the Santa Claus that everybody knows started out being very different in colour, race and origin. We have only really known Santa in the image that is very familiar and popular for less than 100 years. Most remote First Nation children have known him for much less time.

My wish is that all those children out there get to experience the joy and love of functional and caring families this Christmas and holiday season. I worry that far too many of them will have to deal with terrorizing situations because those family members who are supposed to be caring for them are drunk or on drugs. So, if you think that just maybe you might have a problem with addictions and that Christmas is going to be hell for your kids this could be the perfect time to pick up the phone and call your local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous chapter in your town or city to get help. This could be the year you give the very best Christmas present ever to your children.

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